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C O N F I D E N T I A L MANAGUA 000958

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E.O. 12958: DECL: 04/13/2017
TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PINR](#) [KDEM](#) [NU](#)
SUBJECT: ALN: FSLN PLOTTING TO BUY VOTES AND DIVIDE
OPPOSITION

REF: A. MANAGUA 0847

[1](#)B. MANAGUA 0331

[1](#)C. 06 MANAGUA 2725

Classified By: Ambassador Paul Trivelli for reasons 1.4 (b and d)

[1](#)1. (C) Summary: National Assembly deputies of the Nicaraguan Liberal Alliance (ALN) agree that, theoretically, the Assembly could serve as a check to President Ortega's totalitarian tendencies. Unfortunately, the FSLN will work hard to maintain Liberal divisions and build popular support through the use of off-budget funds derived from Venezuelan largesse. End Summary.

[1](#)2. (C) On 21 March, Embassy officials and INR analysts met with ALN deputies Luis Callejas, Ramiro Silva, and Alejandro Bolanos to discuss the actions of the Ortega administration and the role of the opposition. Bolanos commented that Ortega will attempt to implement a Venezuelan model, and the National Assembly is the only body of government that he does not control.

[1](#)3. (C) The deputies agreed that a unification of all of the opposition caucuses is the only way to thwart Ortega's plans. They felt however that the probability of such an alliance is very unlikely because convicted PLC leader and Ortega ally Arnoldo Aleman still controls many PLC votes. Callejas stated that they cannot destroy Arnoldo, but maybe could defeat him through fair internal party elections. Bolanos also warned that several PLC and ALN deputies have already been compromised by FSLN threats and/or bribes. He claimed that the FSLN has appointed a deputy to shadow a member of the opposition and watch their activities. According to Callejas, the six deputies of the Convergencia are a "lost cause" and will never betray Ortega.

[1](#)4. (C) Callejas explained that the FSLN will have \$150 million in off budget funds each year through a deal with Chavez that will allow them to repay 40% of the cost of Venezuelan oil imports in 25 years, while spending the interest on programs that will buy the support of the rural poor. In time, this strategy will garner the FSLN enough votes to win elections outright.

[1](#)5. (C) In the meantime, the FSLN is plotting to keep the opposition divided. Callejas and Bolanos stated that the FSLN/PLC plan to file charges against Montealegre and Bolanos Administration officials so that Cardinal Miguel Obando, head of Ortega,s &Peace and Reconciliation Commission,8 can step in and push for a general amnesty that would include

Aleman. Aleman,s new freedom and the &contrived8 Conservative Party division over whether or not to break from the ALN are all part of a plan coordinated by Ortega to give the ALN an image of weakness, the deputies explained.

¶6. (C) Comment: Although the ALN deputies were pessimistic that the PLC and Convergencia deputies would ever break with the caudillos, Ortega,s increasingly totalitarian behavior has generated public criticism from both groups. Even ALN renegade-turned-Sandinista lawmaker Salvador Talavera has joined the chorus, publicly challenging Ortega to deliver on his campaign agreement to compensate the Contras, or be "made to" do so. The problem, as always, is the lack of leadership in the opposition to provide a coherent alternative. The ALN legislators were easily able to identify challenges, but failed to propose viable solutions.

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